

SNOW WIND AND RAIN

**Nineteenth-Century
Japanese
Woodblock Prints
from the Collection**

Landscapes, which at first only provided sketchy backgrounds for figures in the “floating world” (*ukiyo*) print tradition, emerged as a favorite subject during the nineteenth century. This was made possible by the importation, in the 1820s from Europe, of the newly developed synthetic blue pigment known as German or Prussian blue. This innovation allowed print artists to depict the vibrance of nature, by combining Prussian blue with the traditional gray-blues extracted from the indigo plant. Within a decade, great artists such as Hokusai and Hiroshige introduced memorable series capturing the wonders of famous views in Edo (modern-day Tokyo), as well as towns along various roads to and from the capital, often dotted with human activities. To add drama and variety, artists frequently emphasized various weather conditions and changing seasons, resulting in a range of poignant images, from the stillness of the wintry whiteness to the unsettling turbulence of rainstorms and seasonal winds. Other artists such as Kunisada, Kuniyoshi, and Yoshitoshi further employed the atmospheric qualities of nature to enhance the human drama in a variety of narrative scenes.

Utagawa KUNIYOSHI 歌川国芳

Japanese, 1798-1861

Nightwalker Carrying a Straw Mat with Dog, Parody for Yūgao and Orie, from the series, **“Scenes amid Genji Clouds Matched with Ukiyo-e Pictures”** 1845-1846

Color woodblock print on paper

Lent by Seymour and Shirley Lehrer

L.2012.3.64

At first glance, this is a poetic image of a woman walking with a dog surrounded by fluttering birds on a snowy night. A closer look at her modest clothing and clutched straw mat reveal her identity as a lonely nightwalker—a chilling portrait of a destitute life. The handscroll above with a title and decorated poem featuring a moonflower (*yūgao*) and the long text to her left reference tragic stories of two women who were well-known to Edo viewers from literature and kabuki theater. *Yūgao*, the moonflower, is the name of the lover of Prince Genji in the classic 11th-century novel *The Tale of Genji*. *Orie*, the wife of Yazama, from the tale of *Chūshingura*, or *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, is forced to become a prostitute to support her family. Such remarkable brain-twisting pictorial and textual associations in parody prints amused the fun-seeking Edo audience, developing into a distinct genre towards the middle of the 19th century.

Katsushika HOKUSAI 葛飾北斎

Japanese, 1760-1849

Snow on the Sumida River, from the series
“Snow, Moon, and Flowers” c. 1833

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam collection

1971.3.316

Hiroshige's Landscapes

Hiroshige is known for his evocative portrayal of changing aspects of nature and different times of day—rain, snow, wind, mist, dawn, dusk, and moonlight. He masterfully manipulates color gradation and perspective to achieve poetic moods and employs rhythmic lines and overlapping shapes to capture the atmospheric turbulence of changing weather, as well as their effects on travelers. His prolific output and innovative visions of Japan's countryside inspired generations of print artists well into the 20th century.

Utagawa HIROSHIGE 歌川 広重

Japanese, 1797-1858

***Mt. Fuji and Mt. Ashigara in Clear Weather
after a Snowfall, Numazu Station 13***, from
the series “**Famous Sights of the Fifty-three
Stations**” series first issued 1855

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of Anonymous Donor

00.214.2

Utagawa HIROSHIGE 歌川 広重

Japanese, 1797-1858

***Clear Weather After Snow, Kameyama
Station 47***, from the series **“53 Stations of
Tōkaidō Road”** 1833–1834

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam collection

1971.3.1.47

Utagawa HIROSHIGE 歌川 広重

Japanese, 1797-1858

Travelers in Snow, Ishiyakushi Station 45,
from the series “**53 Stations of Tōkaidō**
Road” 1841–1844

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam Collection

1971.3.17

Utagawa HIROSHIGE 歌川 広重

Japanese, 1797-1858

View of Mt. Akiba, Kakegawa Station 27,
from the series “**53 Stations of Tōkaidō**
Road” 1833–1834

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam collection

1971.3.1.27

Utagawa HIROSHIGE 歌川 広重

Japanese, 1797-1858

Mie River, Yokkaichi Station 44, from the
series “**53 Stations of Tōkaidō Road**”

1833–1834

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam collection

1971.3.1.44

Utagawa HIROSHIGE 歌川 広重

Japanese, 1797-1858

Tora's Rain, Ōiso Station 9, from the series
“53 Stations of Tōkaidō Road” 1833–1834

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam collection

1971.3.1.9

Utagawa HIROSHIGE 歌川 広重

Japanese, 1797-1858

Driving Rain, Shōno Station 46, from the
series **“53 Stations of Tōkaidō Road”**

1833-1834

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam collection

1971.3.1.46

Kobayashi KIYOCHIKA 小林清親

Japanese, 1847-1915

Advance in Snowstorm, from the series
“Views of the Sights of Tokyo” 1895

Color woodblock print on paper, triptych

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Roland A. Way,

1986.31.72a-c

Narrative Scenes

Japanese writers and artists have long used changes in nature to mirror human emotion. The atmospheric effects of rain and snow in dark nights convey the ominous, foreboding moods often found in Japanese literature and art. Artists such as Kunisada, Kuniyoshi, and Yoshitoshi are masters in portraying desolate nighttime landscapes to enrich narrative scenes. Isolated figures, at the mercy of the elements, foreshadow that the characters have little control over their impending misfortunes and tragic endings.

Utagawa KUNISADA 歌川国貞

Japanese, 1786-1865

***Murder of Yoichibei, Act V Scene 2
of a Kabuki Play, Chūshingura***

series first issued late 1840s

Color woodblock print on paper

Gift of the Frederick B. Kellam Collection

1971.3.129

This print, as suggested by its title, is an illustration to a scene from *Chūshingura*, or *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, Japan's most significant samurai loyalty-revenge story. Based on an actual event and popularized by puppet and kabuki plays, the tale follows 47 *rōnin* (masterless samurai) who avenged their master's death and were ordered to commit mass suicide. This print depicts an ominous episode in which the killer, Sadakuro wearing a black robe and carrying a ragged umbrella, is pursuing Yoichibei. The nearly monochromatic palette of the night atmosphere and the stormy bleakness serve to emphasize the tension-filled menacing mood before the murder.

Tsukioka YOSHITOSHI 月岡芳年

Japanese, 1839-1892

***Illustration to Rustic Genji by a Fraudulent
Murasaki***

Color woodblock print on paper, vertical diptych

Gift of Dan Fauci

1995.49.7

This vertical diptych is an unusual format for a print created from two standard *ōban*-sized blocks to approximate a vertical scroll painting. The subject is based on a serialized contemporary adaptation of the classic novel *The Tale of Genji*, written by Lady Murasaki during the 11th century. This scene shows the lovers Genji and Yūgao (reimagined as Mitsūji and Tasagore) caught in an evening rain shower. Using bamboo blinds to shield themselves, the lovers cling tightly to one another. The desolate, monochromatic landscape with a half-moon foreshadows the couple's doomed love affair.

Utagawa KUNIYOSHI 歌川国芳

Japanese, 1798-1861

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Kobayashi KIYOCHIKA 小林清親

Japanese, 1847-1915

Matsuchi Hill at Dusk under Snow, Second Month, from the series “**Views of the Sights of Tokyo**” 1896

Color woodblock print on paper, triptych

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Roland A. Way

1986.31.86a-c

Kiyochika is often considered the last of the *ukiyo-e* (pictures of the floating world) print artists. In this wintry scene, Kiyochika takes inspiration from the landscape artist Hiroshige, known for compositions in which he conveys distance by exaggerating the scale of people and places in the near and far. In this triptych, the expanse of empty space accentuates the arduous distance of this snowy journey.

Carving Tools and Baren for Printing

Japan, 20th century

Wood, metal, and bamboo

Gift of Ron Robertson

2001.73.1a-f

The rich variety of textures and lines found in woodblock prints is achieved through the tools and material used—carvers' blades and a round rubbing *baren*. The printed image is achieved by rubbing the paper with a *baren*, made of a coil of braided cord affixed to a stiff wooden disk coated with lacquer and wrapped in a bamboo leaf.

Key Block

Japan, late 18th century

Cherry wood

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Krene

1985.19.1ab

Among the multitude of blocks required for creating a color woodblock print, the key block is the first to be produced from the original drawing of the artist. It is the outline of the image from which all color blocks would be created. This key block is carved on both sides, demonstrating the economic use of wood in the trade. One side depicts two women and a girl gathering dandelions; the center figure's head has been re-cut (repaired or repurposed) possibly at a later date. The other side are two pages from an illustrated book, containing text and images.

